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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0349  
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RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0360  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4076  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2350  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0388  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1021  
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 0054  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7352  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0196  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1090  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEWMFC/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000431

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: ICRC: IMPROVING UZBEK PRISON CONDITIONS LIKELY TO  
BE LONG-TERM PROJECT

REF: A. A. TASHKENT 324

[1](#)B. B. 07 TASHKENT 1258

[1](#)C. C. TASHKENT 344

[1](#)D. D. 07 TASHKENT 2181

Classified By: Poloff R. Fitzmaurice for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During a five-day visit to Uzbekistan on  
March 27 - April 1 (septels), Acting Deputy Assistant  
Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Pamela Spratlen

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met on March 31 with International Committee of the Red Cross  
(ICRC) Head of Regional Delegation Yves Giovannoni to receive  
an update on the renewal of prison visits in Uzbekistan for a  
six-month trial period, which was announced by the ICRC on  
March 13 (ref A). Giovannoni reported that the ICRC has  
visited two prisons in Tashkent since March 11, and thanked  
the Ambassador for encouraging a "change in attitude" on the  
part of the government. He also noted that the March 11  
visit was conducted in line with ICRC's standard modalities,  
unlike an aborted visit in May 2007. At the end of the  
six-month trial period, Giovannoni said that the ICRC will  
submit a new report to the government with its  
recommendations. Giovannoni recognized that improving prison  
conditions in Uzbekistan was likely to be a long-term  
project, and that continued dialogue with the government was  
the key to success, a sentiment that we certainly share.  
Separately, the director of the Open Dialogue Project  
confirmed on April 2 that the reform-minded Deputy Internal  
Affairs Minister Alisher Sharafutdinov, whom the ICRC had  
hoped would be an important contact for them at the Ministry,  
has left his position and has become Deputy Prosecutor  
General. End summary.

TWO PRISONS VISITS SINCE MARCH 11

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12. (C) A/DAS Spratlen, along with the Ambassador, met with ICRC Head of Regional Delegation Yves Giovannoni and his deputy Raffaello Muller on March 31 to discuss the renewal of prison visits in Uzbekistan, which had been suspended since December 2004. On March 13, the ICRC publicly announced that it had resumed visits to detainees in Uzbek prisons as part of a six-month trial period (ref A). Giovannoni thanked the Ambassador for engaging with the government on restarting a credible and sustained prison visit regime aimed at preventing torture and abuse, which he said had brought about a "change in attitude" on the part of the government. Giovannoni reported that the ICRC has already visited two prisons in Tashkent, both operated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Prison Directorate (GUIN), with the first visit taking place on March 11.

IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORT FROM HIGHER LEVEL OFFICIALS  
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13. (C) Muller, who participated in the prison visits, noted that the body language of the prison officials was not entirely positive, but it was clear that they had been instructed by their superiors to accommodate the ICRC during the visit. He also noted that the presence of the Prison Administration (GUIN) chief Colonel Abdukarim Shodiev during the visit was critical to its success, as he ensured that ICRC conditions were met. Giovannoni added that in his experience, gaining the support of higher level officials, especially President Karimov, was crucial, as his government interlocutors in the different ministries did not appear to communicate well with one another, and things only seemed to get done when pressure was placed upon them from higher up.

ICRC WILL SUBMIT NEW REPORT IN SIX MONTHS  
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14. (C) Giovannoni reported that the prison visit on March 11 was in line with ICRC's standard modalities, in contrast to a previous attempt to restart prison visits in May 2007, which was aborted after a few hours when it became clear that ICRC would not be granted unfettered access to all prisoners (ref B). According to an agreement it signed with the government in 2001, the ICRC is to be granted access to all prisons and detainees; may conduct interviews in private with detainees; and can revisit detention sites at anytime. At the end of the six-month trial period, Giovannoni said that the ICRC will submit a new report to the government with its recommendations. In addition, ICRC will review its recommendations from its last report in 2004 and decide the degree to which those recommendations still need to be addressed by the government.

IMPORTANCE OF REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS AND LONG-TERM APPROACH  
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15. (C) In his discussion with A/DAS Spratlen, Giovannoni recognized the importance of realistic expectations. He noted that improving prison conditions in Uzbekistan was likely to be a long-term project, and that continued dialogue with the government was the key to success. However, he noted that the government needed to respect minimum standards for the ICRC to continue its prison monitoring program, especially for it to continue beyond the current six-month trial period.

APPROXIMATELY 200 DETENTION SITES IN UZBEKISTAN  
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16. (C) Giovannoni reported that there were approximately 200 places of detention in Uzbekistan, including 126 short-term detention sites at police stations operated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 12 detention facilities operated by the National Security Service (NSS), and 65 prisons and detention sites operated by GUIN (which falls under a different branch of the Ministry of Internal Affairs than the one which

operates detention sites at police stations). Although ICRC will have the opportunity over the next six months to visit a fraction of the 200 places of detention, Giovannoni said that ICRC would seek access to places of detention operated by all three government bodies, adding that ICRC would unilaterally suspend prison visits after six months if this does not happen (Comment: This might prove to be a challenge, as the ICRC was never before granted access to NSS detention facilities, ref C. End comment.) Giovannoni also reported that it was important to improve relations with the General Prosecutor's Office (GPO), as GUIN had previously declined to grant ICRC access to some prisoners, claiming that the GPO first had to approve it.

#### COMPOSITION OF ICRC PRISON MONITORING TEAMS

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¶17. (C) Giovannoni explained that the ICRC's Tashkent office is in the process of beefing up its prison observer teams, including hiring a new prison monitoring team coordinator. The prison monitoring teams include three observers, a Russian translator, and a doctor, part of whose responsibilities include inspecting detainees for exposure to tuberculosis and the HIV/AIDS virus. He noted that all of his observers have prior experience with prison monitoring and are fluent in Russian and an unspecified "Turkic language." The teams cannot include Uzbek citizens, as ICRC policy prevents the teams from including citizens of the country in which the inspections are carried out.

#### ICRC SEEKS TO TRACK TUBERCULOSIS IN PRISONS

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¶18. (C) Muller also explained that beyond visits to facilities, the ICRC planned to approach the government on starting a new program to address the spread of tuberculosis in Uzbek prisons, especially of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis. The program would seek to track all infected detainees. Giovannoni noted that the ICRC would not seek to force the government to adopt the program, but noted that its adoption would be a very positive development as it would suggest a commitment to long-term ICRC engagement. In December 2007, GUIN's deputy director told poloff that approximately 1,000 prisoners were infected with tuberculosis, but this number has not been verified by independent experts (ref D).

#### STILL WAITING TO SEE IF KARIMOV WILL MEET ICRC PRESIDENT

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¶19. (C) Giovannoni noted that ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger was still planning to visit Uzbekistan on April 16 - 17. The government still had not confirmed a meeting for Kellenberger with President Karimov, but Giovannoni hoped to receive confirmation shortly. If President Karimov agreed to meet with Kellenberger, Giovannoni said this would be taken as a strong signal that the government was serious about engaging with the ICRC on improving prison conditions (Note: Giovannoni called Ambassador on April 3 to say he has been told orally that Karimov had declined the meeting. Ambassador has contacted the Foreign Ministry to encourage the government to put the meeting on the President's schedule. End note.)

#### SHARAFUTDINOV LEAVES INTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY, BECOMES DEPUTY PROSECUTOR GENERAL

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¶10. (C) Giovannoni expressed interest in trying to meet with Internal Affairs Deputy Minister Alisher Sharafutdinov, who has a reputation for being reform-minded, in order to facilitate adequate access to these facilities and to discuss appeal mechanisms for detainees. However, on April 2, Open Dialogue Project Director Mjusa Sever reported being told by Sharafutdinov that he had left his position as Internal Affairs Deputy Minister and has now become Deputy Prosecutor General (Comment: Though ICRC might have lost a potential

interlocutor at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it may have gained one at the General Prosecutor's Office. Sever was also hopeful that Sharafutdinov's transfer to the General Prosecutor's Office may help ensure that recent legal reforms undertaken by the government, including the abolishment of the death penalty and a law transferring the power to issue arrest warrants from prosecutors to the judiciary, are fully implemented. End comment.)

COMMENT

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¶11. (C) We agree with Giovannoni that improving prison conditions in Uzbekistan, where a large majority of the country's human rights abuses occur, is likely to be a long-term project, and that continued dialogue with the government is the key to eventual success. We are pleased at the degree to which the ICRC has accepted U.S. assistance in building its relationship with the GOU. The relationship between the GOU and the ICRC may continue to be difficult, but progress could significantly improve prison conditions and medical treatment, both important steps for the overall

human rights agenda in the country.

¶12. (U) This message has been cleared by A/DAS Spratlen.

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